

The Builder.

No. CCCCXXI.

SATURDAY, MARCH 1, 1851.



ORD SEYMOUR has at length brought in the long-talked-of new Metropolitan Buildings Bill: the second reading is fixed for the 10th, but whether it will ever reach this depends on political events, at present obscure. Cabinet meeting is going on in Downing-street, but there is a difficulty in procuring joiners, so that what work will be done is uncertain. Our London readers will nevertheless expect to learn from us some particulars of the proposed measure, and we therefore proceed to mention some of its leading points.

It is intitled, "A Bill to amend the Act for regulating the construction and the use of Buildings in the Metropolis and its neighbourhood," but it is in truth a provision for an entirely new Act, superseding that in question. It contains 45 clauses (the present Act has 120), and was ordered to be printed on the 20th of February. The purpose of the Bill, as set forth in the preamble, is, besides making provisions in the present Act for more effectually securing the proper construction of buildings, "to provide other and more effectual means for administering the law relating to metropolitan buildings, and for the determination of questions and disputes respecting the construction and use of buildings, the right to easements, and other matters of like nature," and proposes a complete revolution in the Metropolitan Buildings Office. It will be remembered that the Bill which was presented by Lord Carlisle in 1849, but not proceeded with, contained three official referees as now, but made the registrar, in fact, sole arbitrator. The present Bill sweeps the whole away, and directs the Secretary of State to appoint a competent person, being a barrister of not less than seven years standing, to be and he shall be called the Judge of the Court of Metropolitan Buildings under this Act; and the said Secretary of State is hereby empowered to remove any such judge for inability or misbehaviour."

He is also to appoint a deputy-judge, clerk, and others. The judge is to hold his Court where it shall be fixed: the court is to be Court of Record: the judge may commit any offender for contempt of court, and is to appoint bailiffs and others to issue summonses, and do the business of the court.

"And whereas the questions arising in the said Court of Metropolitan Buildings may be many cases of a technical nature, requiring skill and knowledge of a practical surveyor, architect, and it is desirable that the said judge should be assisted by the advice and information of a person professionally conversant with the construction of buildings, and enabled to give advice of a like nature: be it therefore enacted, that it shall be lawful for the said Commissioners of Works and Buildings to appoint one or more persons, of the profession of an architect or surveyor, to be and to be called "architectural referees," and from time to time, at their pleasure, to remove each architectural referee, and upon any vacancy in the said architectural referees, occasioned by resignation, removal, or otherwise, to

appoint some other person qualified as aforesaid to such office."

The Commissioners of Works may also appoint a competent architect or surveyor to be "the official assistant-surveyor of metropolitan buildings," to assist the architectural referee, and act for him in case of illness. The architectural referee, "as often as he shall be required by the judge of metropolitan buildings so to do, but not otherwise, is to sit as assessor to the said judge in the Court of Metropolitan Buildings, and to assist the said judge with information and advice upon all matters pertaining to the science and profession of an architect or surveyor which may be material to the determination of any question arising in the said court, and whereupon he shall be consulted by the said judge; and also, whenever requested by the said judge so to do, to view or survey any building, structure, work, or operation respecting which any question may arise, or be likely to arise in the said court, and to report thereupon to the judge, in writing or otherwise, as the judge may direct."

Questions of doubt arising under the Act, claims for authority to execute works, and other matters in difference are to be referred to this court, and the judge is to be the sole judge in all matters of difference; to "determine the same in a summary way, and give his decision in open court, in the hearing of the parties or their agents."

"Provided, that whenever the question to be decided by the said court shall consist of matter of fact, or shall involve the right to any easement which under the provisions of this Act may be tried and determined in the said court, it shall be lawful for the said judge, upon the application of any of the parties whose interests may be directly affected by the decision of such question, to order that such matter of fact, whether involving the right to an easement or otherwise, shall be tried by a jury, and the same shall be tried accordingly at the next or other subsequent sitting of the said court, as the judge shall direct; and it shall be the duty of the clerk of the court to cause notice of such intended trial by a jury to be given three days at least before the day on which such trial is to be had, to any of the parties concerned who shall not have been present in the court at which the order for such trial was made."

No person is to be entitled to appear for any other party, unless he be an attorney, barrister, or have the leave of the judge. Witnesses who do not attend on summonses may be fined 10s. All fees, fines, &c. ordered by the court are recoverable by execution against the goods and chattels of the party against whom the order shall have been made. The judge may rehear cases, and rescind or alter previous orders; and he may, with the consent of the parties, refer matters to arbitration. Questions as to right of way, light, and air, or claim to any easements, may be tried and determined by this court, either with a jury or without, if the parties consent. Appeal against the judge's decision in point of law may be made to one of the Superior Courts on a case drawn by the judge himself.

The architectural referee is to receive a salary (not fixed in the Bill) over and above the fees to be received by him for supervision of public buildings.

As to the district surveyors,—the Commissioners of Works are to have power to remove at their pleasure any district surveyor, and, in case of vacancy by such removal, or death, or resignation, to appoint (instead of the magistrate, as heretofore) another qualified person

to the office. The Commissioners may also consolidate some of the districts, and diminish the number of district surveyors as opportunities arise. Every district surveyor hereafter appointed is to reside or have his principal place of business in his district.

Modifications of the Act in certain cases may be made by the Commissioners of Woods, on the certificate of the Court. Greater discretionary powers are given to the district surveyors than by the present Act. The rates of buildings are but slightly changed: a first-rate may cover twenty squares instead of fourteen as now, and a fourth-rate may cover four-and-a-half squares instead of four. The thickness required for walls, too, remains the same, excepting in this, that the party-wall of the uppermost story of a third-rate building may be 9 inches instead of 14 inches as at present.

It will be time enough to say more about this Bill, and our "County Court," when we see how the cat jumps in St. Stephen's.

ON THE DECORATION OF SOME OF THE BUILDINGS AT MUNICH.

THE BASILICA OF ST. BONIFACIUS

Is the most recently erected of the churches at Munich, having been completed only last year. It was erected from the designs of M. Ziehlend in the Byzantine style, more especially in the interior, which resembles that of the Basilica of St. Paul at Rome. It has a nave 250 feet in length, terminating in a semi-circular apse. On each side are a double row of monolithic columns, 20 feet high, forming in all four aisles. These columns are of pale grey marble, the caps and bases being of white marble. The general effect of the church is exceedingly magnificent; the walls above the arches over the columns being covered with beautiful fresco paintings, by Professor Hess and his assistants. The principal range of subjects is that in the tier above the arches, which illustrates the life of St. Bonifacius, the patron saint, who was a native of England: these are contained in twelve grand paintings, each of which has taken a twelvemonth to execute: they are separated by ten circular compartments in chiaro-oscuro. Above these and between the windows is a range of subjects representing events in the lives of the Saints and Martyrs associated with Germany. On the walls of the apse are painted the figures of Christ with the Virgin, St. John, St. Benedict, St. Bonifacius, &c., on a gold ground. The ceiling is an open timber-framed one: the plain wooden ground is coloured rich blue with gold stars, the framing being brown and red, with interlaced ornaments in gold. The ornament on a gold ground, introducing circles in which are the Lamb and banner on a blue ground, forms part of the decoration of the apse. The floor of the church is composed of inlaid marble. When I was at Munich, the frescoes of this church were not completed. I had an opportunity of seeing Professor Hess occupied with painting in fresco, and I remarked that the operation was not so rapid as I had imagined: he worked with great care, using sable pencils. The rich gold-work in the draperies was wonderfully given, and the flesh tints were free from any appearance of blotching.

THE ROYAL LIBRARY

Is a large and handsome building in the Ludwig Strasse; but, like most of the elevations in this new street, the front is exceedingly flat: it is in the Byzantine style, and from the designs of the late Professor Von Gartner. The staircase and the reading-room are the parts more particularly calling for observation. This staircase is a very grand and beautiful feature, whether from its architectural merits, or from the beauty of its polychromatic decoration. It consists of a broad single flight of steps, having on each side a colonnade, supporting a

* See page 118, ante.